

SCOUT JIM BAKER.

Half a Century of Adventure on the Mountain Trails in the Northwest.

Scouting for John C. Fremont and Marching With Doniphan to Mexico.

A Fearful Old Age After a Life of Danger—Not up to the Latest Inventions.

Will C. Ferril in Denver Republican: Recently old Jim Baker, the far-famed scout, hunter, trapper and guide visited Denver. Now about 80 years of age, he is the oldest scout in the west, having lived over half a century on the frontier. With a constitution that yields slowly to the burdens of four-score years he is quite hale and vigorous; but time is doing its work, and old Jim Baker has changed more rapidly during the past two years. When I saw him, not long since, in this city, he presented a decidedly broken appearance. Dressed in a dark suit and blue flannel shirt, and wearing a white sombrero, he was standing on a street corner talking with some fifty-niners of the days of the great Pike's Peak excitement. But it was long before that time that Jim Baker came to the then wilderness of the Rocky mountains. It was about 1836 that he started out from the little hamlet of Independence, Mo., now a suburb of Kansas City, which was not laid off until fifteen years later. For fifty-two years Jim Baker has led an eventful life on the frontier. Contemporarily with Kit Carson and the famous scouts of that period, he came before Fremont and Gilpin, Harney and Kearney, and will ever be a historic figure in the early settlement of the Rocky Mountain country.

Jim Baker has scouted for Fremont and ex-Gov. Gilpin, and was with the latter on the American flag in Colorado. He was with Doniphan on his famous march in the Mexican war, and one of the hardest fights he ever had was in this campaign, engaging a hostile band of Indians in the Panhandle. Jim Baker was also a scout with the veteran Gen. Harney at Ash Hollow, when the Sioux were driven back after a terrible battle. He was with Gen. Johnston's command in that unfortunate expedition sent out by the government against the Mormons in 1857.

No living scout has a record like that of Jim Baker, and but a few of those that ever lead so eventful a life. He is the last of that old type of hunters that will live in the romance that always links itself with the borderland between civilization and the home of the savages. There is not a frontiersman or mountaineer in all the West that has so characteristic a face as old Jim Baker. As I stood watching the veteran hunter and scout I wondered not that some Denver school boys, in passing, should stop and look up into his face with an inquiring glance. They knew not who he was, but any stranger would stop to look at old Jim Baker. Not for any peculiarity in dress, but for his characteristic face and appearance. It is truly a wonderful face, one that you might study for hours and then find something new and attractive in it. His picture is in the studio of every Denver artist. It is the type for all their models. There is none other like it. His beard is white and grizzled. The long, wavy hair, reaching down on his shoulders, is now almost as white. When I first knew him there were heavy streaks of dark mingled with the gray, but they are now nearly white. There are deep wrinkles on the forehead and in the face. The eye, which in bygone years was unerring in aim of the rifle, is now getting dim, but still possesses much of the eagle glance of half a century ago. Nature has chased the features of old Jim Baker, rugged like the granite rocks; bronzed and tanned by sunshine and mountain storm; with wrinkles, made heavy and deep by great age; with hair white, like mountain snows; grim-visaged, brave as a lion, yet gentle and modest as a child. He has a thousand thrilling adventures on the plains and in the mountains, old Jim Baker looks verily what he is—the last and truest type of the American hunter that for 500 years has been blazing a trail for civilization from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

When Jim Baker came west there were no white women in the Rocky Mountains, and he married a Shoshone squaw, by whom he has raised a family. It was the pioneers say that Jim Baker married two squaws, one of whom he sent back to her tribe in later years, and the other was stolen from him. It was a good thing for the squaw thief that he was out of the way of Baker's rifle, for the old scout would have killed him. Love did not always run smooth even in those early days on the frontier.

Jim Baker knew every phase of Indian life, and was known to all the chiefs of the great tribes. Next to Kit Carson he was the crack rifle-shot of the frontier, and Carson often acknowledged that Jim Baker was his only rival in the use of the rifle. His last work as a scout was during the Utah outbreak about ten years ago, when Father Meeker was massacred. With plenty in his old age, he lives on his ranch on Snake river, near the northern Colorado boundary line, occasionally hunting and fishing and following his favorite sport of trapping the beaver, and about once a year he comes to Denver, hunts up some of the pioneers, talks over reminiscences of the early days, and then returns to his mountain home.

On one of these periodic visits to Denver Jim Baker for the first time saw a street car. To him it was a remarkable invention to see "the stage-like thing" pulled along on a track. He was so delighted that he spent the entire day riding to the end of the track and back on the various lines. A ride like that for a nickel seemed like a very small fare. Visiting Denver at still a later period, he thought he would take another ride on the street cars. He was not up with the times, and was greatly alarmed on seeing the car running along without without horses attached to it. Rushing to the rear he jumped as if for his life and fell sprawling in the street. It was an electric car and old Jim Baker could not understand. Skeptical in his new era hereafter, and like the old-time hunter, he is inclined somewhat to the Indian idea of the Great Manitou. In speaking to a friend afterward about the electric car incident he said, "He didn't know whether there was a God or not, but thought then there might be one."

The following incident, one of hundreds that could be told of this famous scout, well illustrates his nerve and daring. He and another hunter once when crossing the mountains came upon two young grizzly bears. "I think we can get away with the varmints with our hunting knives," said Baker to his friend. The bears were sure game with their rifles, but this was no sport for these two frontiersmen, and so they each singled out a grizzly, unsheathed their knives and started for him. It was a harder task they thought, for the grizzlies, though not quite grown, were strong and made the fight long and dangerous.

Baker's grizzly almost had him in his iron grasp once, but with a quick turn of his knife Baker cut into the stomach of his antagonist. Then, turning about to see how his companion had come out of the fight, Baker made the discovery that his

friend had fled and a second grizzly bear was closing upon him. Baker was tired out by the first encounter, and now he was compelled to meet another, and there was no time to get his rifle. It was a terrible struggle, but Baker was fighting for his life and not for sport. It was some time before he killed the bear, weakened as he had been in the first contest. A hunter who can kill two grizzly bears with a hunting knife, one immediately after another, must have been a man of terrible strength and iron nerve.

The growth of the west seems almost like a dream to old Jim Baker. When he started for the Rocky Mountains there were but few people in the transmississippi country, for St. Louis then had only a few thousand inhabitants. New empires and commonwealths have sprung up since then and he has lived to see it all. Now 15,000,000 people live west of the Mississippi river. A new civilization has come, and the railroads now climb the mountains where he used to blaze the trail. Old Jim Baker's work is done; his mission is over, but he will live in history, not only for his great work in helping to open the way for this new civilization, but for his nobility of character and worthy deeds without number. When I thought of Baker I always think of the old trapper that James Fenimore Cooper made famous in the story of the "Prairie," the last of the Leatherstocking Tales. It is a beautiful picture the novelist draws of the death scene of the old trapper among the Pawnees of the plains. Life wasted away as a candle flickers out. So I have thought old Jim Baker would pass away, for old age, and not disease, is slowly weakening the once vigorous and iron frame of this famous hunter and scout. His burden of years is heavy, and soon he will cross that unknown trail we all must follow.

BELLE STARR'S ADVENTURES.

A Desire to Avenge a Brother Started Her Career as a Desperado.

Fort Smith, Ark., special: New facts concerning the adventurous career of Belle Starr, recently killed in the Indian Territory, are constantly coming to light. According to a lawyer of this city who knew Belle from her infancy, and defended her in each of her trials, her father, John Shirley, removed to Carthage, Mo., from Ohio, twenty years before the war and kept a hotel known as the Carthage House, where Myra Shirley was born. Her early years were spent at home and nothing occurred to break the family circle until her eldest brother, Allison Shirley, was murdered towards the end of the war by Kansas jayhawkers. The day after the murder Myra was in the saddle in hot pursuit of her brother's murderers. The prevalence of border warfare and the great number of straggling troops then in southwestern Missouri gave the young daredevil ample opportunity to show her prowess and win the battery she liked. Although grief at Allison's death killed Mrs. Shirley, the wayward girl never again went home to stay, but linked her fortunes with the famous band of guerrillas, headed by Quantrill. John Shirley went to Dallas county, Texas, soon after the war ceased and was often visited by his daughter when it became necessary for her to hide from the officials in Kansas and Missouri.

After Quantrill's gang disbanded, Myra fell in with the James and Younger brothers, and lived with Cole Younger, although they were never married. She said that he was the father of her beautiful daughter, Pearl Younger, who is also a notorious woman in the Indian country. While on a visit to her aged father in Texas she met and married a desperado named Reed, and by him had a son who was one of the first to reach her dead body last Monday. Reed was shot and killed by United States officers at Paris, Tex., in 1899, and it was just before his death that the woman, then known as Belle Reed, stole \$32,000 from Walt Grayson, a Cherokee Indian, forcing him to deliver the money at the muzzle of a six-shooter. She claimed to be an Indian and was tried in an Indian court. To find her guilty would have been like assaulting the entire neighborhood, and the court acquitted her after a short trial, in which the terror of the court itself was the most interesting feature.

As soon as Reed was buried Belle married a full-blooded Creek Indian, named Sam Starr, and thenceforth she was known as Belle Starr. Their honeymoon was spent in this city in the United States court, where both were tried and found guilty of horse stealing and sent to the Detroit jail. Upon her return to the Indian country she was arrested for larceny and acquitted.

Sam Starr was killed in a brawl four years ago and Belle then began living with Jim Starr, alias Bill Jolly, her late husband's brother. Jim corroborates the statement given here. No other person named Belle Starr has ever been heard of in this country.

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